



December 31, 2009

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Coverage Expansion for Children Takes Effect Jan. 1

(TOPEKA) – Thousands of Kansas children will become eligible for low-cost health insurance starting Jan. 1 thanks to an expansion of the Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP).

When the new year begins, the eligibility limit for the Kansas CHIP program will increase from 200 percent of the current poverty level to 250 percent of the 2008 poverty level. That translates to \$44,000 a year for a family of three, or \$53,000 a year for a family of four. Families with children in CHIP pay premiums of \$20 per-family per-month if their incomes are above 150 percent of poverty; \$30 per month for incomes above 175 percent of poverty; \$50 per month for incomes above 200 percent of poverty; and \$75 per month, per family for those with incomes above 225 percent of poverty.

“This is a significant opportunity for Kansas families who can’t afford private health insurance for their children,” said KHPA Acting Executive Director Andy Allison. “Improving children’s health is a top priority for everyone, and one of the most important steps in accomplishing that is to make sure children have access to affordable coverage so they can get the care they need. This expansion will make that easier for thousands of working families who either can’t afford or don’t have access to private insurance.”

CHIP is a joint federal-state program that provides health coverage to uninsured children whose families earn too much to qualify for Medicaid. In Kansas the federal government provides about 72 percent of the funding and the state provides the other 28 percent. In November 2009, there were 39,447 Kansas children enrolled in the program.

Kansas lawmakers first authorized the expansion in 2008, subject to additional federal funding becoming available. That federal funding became available in 2009 when Congress passed the Children’s Health Insurance Program Reauthorization Act (CHIPRA). Following passage of that act, the 2009 Kansas Legislature approved funding (\$1.2 million) to cover the state’s share of the expansion.

As a result of the legislature’s actions and state efforts to increase participation in CHIP, the Kansas Health Policy Authority was awarded a five-year, \$40.3 million federal grant that will be used to enhance outreach efforts and to acquire new technology that will improve and streamline the application process.

Currently, people applying for either Medicaid or CHIP benefits must submit hard-copy applications which are available on the [KHPA website](http://www.khpas.gov). Applications are also available at all area offices of the Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services.

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